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SUBJECT: CDA DISCUSSES DARFUR WITH UNAMID COMMANDER

1. (SBU) Summary. General Martin Luther Agwai, outgoing Force Commander for the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), told Charge on August 26 that Darfuris know little about democracy, and view the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) as a southern party, while the Arab tribes view the National Congress party (NCP) as best able to protect their interests. He questioned the current approach to aid in Darfur, which he said created dependence on IDP camps and external actors. The General also noted hopeful signs for de-escalation of the conflict between Sudan and Chad in the form of cross-border communication between junior commanders. End Summary.

#### No Obvious Political Solution

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2. (SBU) General Agwai stated that he had not heard Darfuris express any affinity or solidarity with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). The General said that most Darfuris view the SPLM solely as a southern party. He added that he also has not seen the SPLM making a real effort to gain support in Darfur. General Agwai said that, while the Arab tribes of Darfur do have their own regional aspirations, they do have an affinity to the National Congress Party (NCP) as they view the NCP as best able to protect their interests. Regarding upcoming elections, the General stated that the concept of democracy was almost non-existent in Darfur, that most people focused exclusively on tribal and local affiliation, and that therefore, people in Darfur did not have a view toward an ideal outcome in national elections.

3. (SBU) General Agwai stated that continuing rebel fragmentation had made the work of UNAMID very challenging, since there was no fixed rebel command structure with which to discuss issues, or on which to apply pressure. General Agwai blamed the political fragmentation in Darfur on the selfishness of the actors involved. He stated that rather than representing a constituency, most rebel leaders are seeking money, power and "the chance to see their face in the newspaper." He added that rebel groups had become so fragmented that they were little more than bandits. He said he does not expect major fighting for the time being, but that fighting will escalate again at the end of the rainy season.

#### Camps Provide Services Not Available in Villages

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4. (SBU) General Agwai questioned the current approach to aid in Darfur. He stated that Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) had, in some respects, come to prefer IDP camps to their villages because the camps provide schools, medical care and free food which their villages do not have, and never did. He noted that some IDPs have begun moving in and out of the camps, returning to their villages to farm for significant periods, and then returning to the camps. He indicated that this willingness to move back and forth connotes an improved security situation, as IDPs were not farming two years ago. The General expressed the view that moving the benefits of the

camps closer to the villages may be a way to encourage voluntary return.

15. (SBU) General Agwai stated that international actors had made the rebels in Darfur intransigent. He said that the people of Darfur have come to believe that progress consists of more involvement from the international community. He stated that he believes the world's attention to Darfur will soon move on to other issues and that the window of opportunity for real improvement there is limited.

Hopeful Signs in Sudan/Chad Conflict?

16. (SBU) General Agwai said there were signs of communication and cooperation among lower level military commanders on the Sudan/Chad border. He noted one incident in which a Chadian commander and a Sudanese commander had talked on the phone in order to end a cross border incursion from Chad into Sudan. The General expressed the hope that this kind of dialog would de-escalate this conflict.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: General Agwai has a deep knowledge of the challenges in Darfur, having commanded UNAMID since its establishment in July, 2007. General Agwai's observations regarding non-Arab Darfuris feeling no connection to the SPLM or any other viable political force adds to the general pessimism about the viability of national elections there. His view that IDPs will choose to continue to move into and out of the IDP camps to take advantage of services not available in their villages argues for a change of approach to aid in Darfur. General Agwai's information about lower level contact between Sudanese and Chadian commanders offers some hope for a de-escalation of that proxy conflict, though

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it is unclear whether this is an anomaly or a trend. END COMMENT.

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